

Thomas Beamish

The youngest of the Mt Hicks volunteers to enlist in 1916 (18/5/1916). Thomas Beamish gave his age on the enlistment papers as 18 years and 10 months. Three months earlier he had tried to join up with his real name of Thomas Beamish, but his uncle, Alfred Hyland found out and notified the authorities about his age. In July he tried again, enlisting this time as Thomas James Beamish, and was accepted into a training camp at Claremont, Tasmania before any of his family realised. His service number was 1800 and he was in the Tasmanian Battalion, the 40th.

He was only 16 years old.

The following is taken from the North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times (Tas – Saturday 10 March 1917)

SOLDIER'S LETTERS

Four Nights in No Man's Land

Writing to Mr. A. B. Smart, Upper Mount Hicks, from the 3rd London General Hospital, under date January 3. Private T. J. Beamish says –

“I did not stay long in France – only about a month, and five days all told in the front line. I had spent four nights in No Man's Land and was just coming out when I got in the road of one of Fritz's bullets, and “bit the mud” for a second or two. I got up again and made for the parapet, when he grazed my right arm with another bullet. I managed to walk out of the trenches to our first dressing station, and from there I was transported to England. I enjoyed myself while I was in the trenches. S. Tippet was alright when I left. I had a jolly good Christmas, although I could not walk, owing to the first bullet going through my left thigh. Christmas dinner we had was as much roast Turkey as we could eat, vegetables, pudding, cakes and fruit of all descriptions. I got a present from the Australian Red Cross, and I can assure you it was very acceptable. It consisted of tobacco, pipe, cigarettes, sweets, writing paper, and soap. I also received one from the sister and nurses. I have had a splendid time in here, and I suppose it will be another week or two before I can walk yet.”

Once fully recovered Thomas went back to France where he again was wounded. He eventually made it home in 1919, after the war ended on 11 November 1918.

He never spoke much of the war in his later years, except that the pea soup tasted like water with a pea attached to a piece of string pulled through it. He also had great admiration for the Salvation Army. He used to say that they were right up at the front in the thick of the fighting looking after the wounded.

Thomas signed up for WW2, and was a member of the Western Australian Volunteer Defence Corps.